

"So Great a Salvation" (Heb. 2:3)

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"What you need to know about **PREDESTINATION**...but was afraid to ask!"

This great Salvation wrought by God in Christ is like a **lustrous, multi-faceted diamond** that features beautifully varied aspects and effects that require careful and thoughtful appreciation. If such truths are ignored or neglected, we become unmoored and soon drift away (**Heb. 2:1**)! Last week we began to underline three precious aspects of redemption that speak as to Salvation being a matter of **God's gracious, sovereign initiative and miraculous intervention**.

I. Divine ELECTION and PREDESTINATION (Eph. 1:3-6, 11; Rom. 8:28-30, 9:1-29): The Father *chose* (i.e., *elected*) us as particular individuals and foreordained (i.e., *predetermined*) our redemption in Eternity Past, before the very foundation of the Universe. Our coming unto personal salvation was not simply a matter of "fate" or "dumb luck;" rather, it was the result of the intelligent initiative and purposeful activity of an infinitely wise & holy God who has His own holy purposes.

This election was totally *gracious* and *unconditional*; it was NOT based upon any merit, faith, or good works that God foresaw within us (**Rom. 9:10-13, 16**). Rather, it was based upon His own sovereign good pleasure (**Rom. 9:15, 22**). God's plans and purposes are most HOLY and WISE—and must not be challenged, or labelled "unjust" or "unfair" (**Rom. 9:14, 20**). NO ONE is "entitled" to His special grace: ALL have sinned (**Rom. 3:23**); NONE is righteous (**Rom. 3:10**)! If God were to deal with us in accordance with *naked justice*, ALL would be lost! NATURAL MAN (apart from God's grace) is by NATURE a spiritually dead, God-hating sinner who is a child of wrath (**Rom. 3:9-18; Eph. 2:1-2, 7**) that is blinded by Satan (**2Cor. 4:4**) and CANNOT discern spiritual matters (**1Cor. 2:14, Rom. 8:7**) due to the lethal ravages of the Fall. **Total Depravity** means that the effects of the Fall have extended to every aspect of Man's being, and that men are fully dependent upon Divine grace, being unable *by nature* to seek God and contribute unto their own salvation.

2. God's REGENERATION of the Human Heart. The Doctrine of **ORIGINAL SIN** means that human beings have inherited a SINFUL NATURE from Adam through our parents (**Ps. 51:5**), and that **Natural Man**, *by nature*, is at enmity with God and is a *natural born sinner*—and therefore does not desire the good things of God (including the Gospel). Jesus has instructed us that man's problem begins with the HEART (**Matt. 7:17-20**). An **unregenerate man** with a heart of *stone* (**Ezek. 36:26**) does not *desire* God, and thus, will not, of his own initiative, exert his *will* in a movement towards God.

But what of Man's "free-will," you may ask? The answer is that man's WILL does not arise from out of a *vacuum*; rather, it proceeds from out of the HEART. The HEART is father to our DESIRES, and the exertions of our WILL proceed from our DESIRES (**Matt. 12:33-35; 15:18-19**). Apart from the grace of God, an unregenerate heart will **always freely choose** against the One True God. It is Natural Man's *very nature* to do so! Note the **Parable of the Sower** (**Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23**); the *seed* is the same, but the *soils* are different!

So, what is God's prescribed CURE for this otherwise fatal condition? **ANSWER:** a **HEART TRANSPLANT** (**Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26**)!!! This is the **NEW BIRTH** (i.e., *regeneration*)—apart from which no man can ever hope to see the Kingdom of God (**John 3:3**). This regeneration is the sovereign, miraculous, supernatural act of God (**John 1:13; 3:8**); we are made new creatures in Christ (**2Cor. 5:17**)! This is solely the **work of God**, lest no man should boast (**Eph. 2:5, 8-9**). A **regenerated heart**—born anew through the application of God's appointed means; namely, the *Word* (**1Pet. 1:23**)—is now favorably disposed towards the things of God, and of its own *freewill*, makes a genuine free choice *for* Christ! With a heart quickened and resurrected from the dead (**Eph. 2:5-6**) comes a renewal of a man's desires, affections, and will.

In the logical *Order of Salvation* (**ordo salutis**), God's sovereign regeneration *precedes* faith. While in temporal human experience, this might all *seem* to occur in a moment, we must affirm that Faith is logically the **fruit** of regeneration,

not its **cause** (*John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:1; Acts 13:48*). Natural Man is DEAD (*Eph. 2:1*)—and dead men cannot answer a call any more than Lazarus of Bethany could answer a summons to rise from his tomb until Jesus, by His Divine, miraculous power, quickened him and gave him living-ears to hear (*John 11:43*).

BOTTOM LINE: Salvation is not simply a “natural” thing, gendered by logical arguments, slick entertainment, or emotional manipulation. **It is a powerful act of God!!!**

3. God’s EFFECTUAL CALLING. Let us carefully note the **Golden Chain of Redemption of *Romans 8:28-30***. First, it speaks of those whom God “**foreknew**.” This is NOT simply speaking of those whom God *foresees* (an omniscient God foresees *all things*—including the acts of the wicked). The term *foreknew* here is rather employed as a **covenant-relational term**: the “foreknown” are those **predestined** individuals whom God has “**foreloved**” and sovereignly chosen to enter into an **eternal and unconditional Covenant Relationship** with. Note that **ALL** of the foreloved (vv. 28-29) are “**CALLED**.” And **ALL** of the called will be “**JUSTIFIED**” (pronounced legally righteous and found not guilty), and that **ALL** of those who are justified will be “**GLORIFIED**” (i.e., brought to the consummate state of salvation)! **Thus ALL of the “foreknown” shall be saved.**

But...**HOW** are **ALL** of the “**CALLED**” ultimately **JUSTIFIED** and **GLORIFIED**? What is meant by the term “called?”

ANSWER: there is a difference between the **GENERAL CALL** (i.e., the universal invitation unto salvation that we are commanded to offer unto *all* people through the open proclamation of the Gospel; *Mark 16:15*), on the one hand, and on the other, the **EFFECTUAL CALL**, (i.e., the *specific, internal call* by God's Holy Spirit that is *ultimately effectual and successful* in drawing unto salvation those whom He has chosen to save (*John 6:37, 44; Acts 13:48*)).

***John 6:44:** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

BOTTOM LINE: God is ALWAYS successful in the outworking of His eternal plan to save those whom He has foreloved and chosen to initiate a Covenant Relationship with. Indeed, His amazing **efficacious grace** CANNOT fail!

OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLICAL VIEW CONSIDERED

1) Why evangelize if it's all pre-determined? Doesn't Election & Predestination undermine evangelism? **ANSWER:** God's eternal plans also embrace the MEANS through which those plans *must* be realized. Thus, God has pre-determined the MEANS of salvation, which is through **intercessory prayer**, **Bible preaching**, (1Pet. 1:23), and the exercise of the **Great Commission** (Matt. 28:19-20). Apart from these, men *cannot* be saved. **So evangelize!**

2) The Love of God. Doesn't God love all people and desire their salvation? **John 3:16? 2Pet. 3:9? 1Tim. 2:4?** **ANSWER:** **First**, the matter of "God's will" is expressed in various ways. God's **sovereign will** refers to His ordaining whatever comes to pass. But His **dispositional will** refers to that which emotionally pleases Him. **NO ONE** is saying that God *rejoices* in the death of the wicked (**Ezek. 18:23**)! **Second**, God has a general benevolence towards His creation (**Matt. 5:45**)—but this is NOT the same as His eternal & unconditional Covenant-Love for His *Bride*. **Also** some men are an *abomination* to Him (**Dt.22:5**); He is involved in an *adversarial relationship* with them. Divine love is not merely an emotion; it is a *decisive choice*—and it is NOT uniformly expressed unto all creatures in the same way (**Rom. 9:13**). **Third**, some of the above passages in context are *not* universal in the absolute sense (e.g., the "us" of 2 Pet. 3:9 seems to refer to the ingathering of the Elect; note the Epistle is addressed to Christians: **2Pet.1:1**)!

3) But doesn't Efficacious Grace make men mere robots?

ANSWER: Men are *not* robots, who have neither soul nor personality—and who are thus not morally accountable unto God. Autonomous fallen Men are **SINNERS**, however, and act in accordance with their own nature, *freely and inevitably choosing evil*. They must be rescued by God's gracious initiative (**1John 4:19**).

*It is of interest to note that the chief rival view amongst Evangelicals, called **Arminianism**, recognizes that men are **by nature** spiritually dead. But wanting everyone to have an "even shot," they have concocted the fantastic notion that **ALL** men are **partially regenerated** (in marked contrast to the **Biblical/Calvinist** view, which teaches that **SOME** men are **fully regenerated**). The problem: **there is absolutely NO SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT** for a "partial regeneration!"*